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25% OF GLOBAL COVID DEATHS LAST WEEK WERE FROM INDIA

WHO Epidemiological Update said that of the 93,000 global deaths between April 26 & May 2, India accounted for 23,000

46% GLOBAL CASES IN THE SUBCONTINENT

Continuing the trend of spike that started around eight weeks ago, the global case count touched 57 lakh in the past one week, of which 26 lakh came from India. In the South-East Asia Region, case and death counts were high, with India accounting for over 90% in both categories. The WHO said the case count was at its highest levels since the beginning of the pandemic

EUROPE & AFRICA RECORD LESSER DEATHS

- Cases in India surged by 20%, the highest globally, followed by Brazil, which saw an increase of only 4%, the report added
- Case incidence in the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, Africa & the Americas slumped, while the Western Pacific Region was stable
- Death count decreased in Europe, Africa and the Western Pacific

32%

DECREASE IN CASES RECORDED IN TURKEY, FOLLOWED BY FRANCE'S 21%

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Allow use of all oxygen produced within, says K'taka

Asks Centre to cut quantity sent to other states as the Covid-19 count is galloping in the state

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN an attempt to address the urgent need to augment oxygen supplies, especially after the deaths of Covid-19 patients in some districts due to its shortage, Karnataka on Wednesday approached the Centre requesting that it be allowed to use all of the oxygen produced within the state.

Large and Medium-scale Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar, who has been given charge of oxygen augmentation, supply and procurement, said, "The state has increased its oxygen production, but it is sent to other states as well. The Central Government has provided oxygen supplies to Karnataka from other states, but the supply is long overdue. I have consulted Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Pralhad Joshi to reduce the quantum of oxygen being shipped out to other states and to allow its use within Karnataka," he said.

As per the increased medical oxygen production capacities in Karnataka after the second wave hit hard, 14 industries produce a total of 1,767 tons of oxygen per day of which 865 tons is allocated to Karnataka. About 140 tons of medical oxygen produced in Karnataka is sent to other states. Shettar has asked for this oxygen also to be used locally, given the Covid-19 caseload. The State Government has also asked all industries to reduce steel production and increase oxygen production.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Siddaramaiah, too demanded that the Centre allow the state to utilise all the oxygen produced within. "Oxygen allocated to the state does not meet even 50 per cent of the demand. The Union Government has to allocate oxygen depending on the demand in the state. People are dying due to oxygen shortage. The Chamarajanagar hospital, where 24 people died, requires 350 cylinders of medical oxygen every day. But, on the day of the incident, only 120 cylinders were supplied. It takes 48 hours for oxygen to reach Karnataka from Odisha. The government should allow the state to consume all of the oxygen that is produced here," he insisted.

CONTINUED ON: P5

K'TAKA SECOND WAVE BATTLE

50,112
FRESH CASES

23,106 ARE IN BENGALURU URBAN

346 DEATHS | 32.28% POSITIVITY RATE

DIST-WISE CASES

2,790 MYSURU | 2,335 TUMAKURU

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said he has directed his cabinet colleagues to camp in their districts and focus on curbing the spread

Karnataka crosses the one crore-mark in inoculation of vaccines, with 1,00,72,795 jabs logged as on May 5

Coming under fire for deaths of Covid patients, Chamarajanagar district minister S Suresh Kumar visits hospital wearing PPE kit

STATEWIDE	MAY 4	MAY 5
Active Cases	4,64,363	4,87,288
CFR	0.65%	0.69%
Swab Tests	1,53,707	1,55,224

Indian Navy ship INS Talwar carrying two liquid medical oxygen containers to Karnataka, with a capacity of 20 metric tons each, arrives in Mangaluru from Bahrain on Wednesday | EXPRESS

Allot 1.2K tons of oxygen to the state immediately, High Court tells Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

AFTER the Union Government failed to take a decision on increasing the oxygen quota for Karnataka despite sufficient time being granted, the Karnataka High Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to immediately allocate 1,200 metric tons a day to the state, considering the gravity of the situation, and to uphold the right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The court also directed the State Government to estimate the projected demand for oxygen over the next seven days and submit additional representation to the Centre for adequate supply. The Union Government should consider it in four days from Wednesday. Till such time the request is considered, the Centre should allocate 1,200 MTD to the state, the court ordered.

"The minimum requirement of oxygen in the state is 1,162 MTD. The state's request for supply of 1,792 MTD of oxygen, considering the active cases by May 5, is pending before the Centre. In the circumstances, we have no option but to issue mandatory directions to the Government of India to consider the state's request", a division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice Aravind Kumar said in the order passed during a special sitting on the crisis in the state due to lack of oxygen, medicine and beds. P4

'PANDEMIC MADE MORE PEOPLE POOR'

Bengaluru: A report by Azim Premji University has revealed that around 23 crore people are estimated to have fallen below the national minimum wage poverty line due to the impact of Covid-19, and 1.5 crore workers remain jobless by the end of 2020. P12

JAISHANKAR JOINS G7 MEET VIRTUALLY

London: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday joined the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers Meeting in London virtually after he decided to withdraw from the face-to-face meetings because of possible exposure to Covid.

NATIONWIDE	MAY 4	MAY 5
Fresh cases	3,57,229	3,82,315
Recoveries	3,20,289	3,38,439
Deaths	3,449	3,780

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
May 4: 11,49,009 doses
May 5: 18,90,346 doses
TOTAL: 16,24,30,928

TIGHT DEADLINE

SC puts Centre on leash while giving relief from contempt

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a contempt notice slapped on the Centre by the Delhi High Court but gave the government time till 11 am on Thursday to share its comprehensive action plan on ramping up medical oxygen supply to Delhi's hospitals to 700 MT.

"The plan shall indicate the sources of supply, provisions for transportation, and all other logistical arrangements necessary to ensure the fulfillment of the requirement of NCT of Delhi," its order later said.

A bench comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said exercising powers under contempt will not solve the problem faced by Delhi. "When the country is facing a humanitarian crisis, the court must aim at problem-solving," their order read.

"The Centre's effort now has to be to comply. Putting officers in jail or hauling them up for contempt is not going to get oxygen to Delhi," the order added.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said, "If Delhi gets 500 MT of oxygen, they will be able to manage." However, Justice Chandrachud said, "As an institution, we can't accept that. We ourselves have ordered you to supply 700 MT. We can't go back."

Mehta said, "It is my assumption that a particular quantity is enough. It is the case of the Delhi government that they need 700 and after some days 900. Let there be an audit by an independent body on the real requirement." Delhi received 585 MT on Wednesday.

RETIRED HC JUDGE TO PROBE CHAMARAJANAGAR DEATHS: GOVT

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE State Government on Wednesday appointed Justice B A Patil, a retired judge of the Karnataka High Court, as a one-man Commission of Inquiry to probe the events leading to the deaths of 24 Covid-19 patients at the Chamarajanagar District Hospital on Sunday, allegedly due to lack of oxygen.

On Monday, the government had appointed senior IAS officer and KSRTC MD Shivayogi Kalasad as the inquiry officer and directed him to submit a report in three days. The Congress had termed the deaths as murder and demanded a judicial probe.

In an order issued on Wednesday, the State Government stated that it is of the opinion that it is necessary to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to look into the circumstances and events leading to the deaths. The terms of reference of the commission also stated that it will inquire into "similar incidents which are entrusted to the Commission of Inquiry by the government." The Commission of Inquiry shall exercise all the powers under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, and under the Code of Civil Procedure. "The commission shall submit its report within one month," the order stated.

The office of the commission shall be located in Mysuru. The Commissioner, Health and Family Welfare Department, shall make arrangements for remuneration and allowances, office accommodation, mobility, staff, communication and other necessary infrastructure to conduct the inquiry, the order said.

HC QUESTIONS GOVT ON APPOINTING COMMISSION

Expressing displeasure over the manner in which the State Government appointed a Commissioner to conduct a probe, under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, into the death of 24 Covid patients in Chamarajanagar, the Karnataka High Court has directed the Covid Monitoring Committee headed by former judge, Justice AN Venugopala Gowda, to look into the records of the offices of the Chamarajanagar and Mysuru DCs over the supply of oxygen to the hospital, and submit a report by Monday. P3

RBI warns of lasting economic pain, offers balm for affected sectors

SESA SEN @ New Delhi

WITH the second wave of Covid infections peaking in many parts of the country and experts warning of a third wave, the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday admitted that India's economic outlook seems "highly uncertain" and that all projections can go awry.

In an unscheduled address on Wednesday, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said the unexpected spike in Covid cases and localised lockdowns could stymie economic recovery.

To cushion the blow to the economy, Das unloaded various monetary tools for banks and relief measures for small businesses as well as individuals.

The RBI announced a special ₹50,000 crore term liquidity facility with three-year tenor for banks to support entities such as vaccine manufacturers. Das also announced a one-time loan restructuring for individuals as well as cash-starved sectors. Banks will create a 'Covid loan book' and such loans will be considered as priority sector lending. Further, banks can park surplus liquidity equal to the size of such books with RBI for a rate 40 bps higher than reverse repo rate of 3.35%.

While the announcement nudged banks to undertake fresh lending to the emergency health services, it may be noted that bank credit offtake was only 5.6% in FY21 despite a host of liquidity measures by RBI last fiscal.

The central bank has offered a special ₹10,000-crore long-term repo operation of three years tenor for small finance banks for on-ward lending. This move is aimed at enhancing the flow of credit to microfinance institutions, which are grappling to raise funds.

Third wave is inevitable, says Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Centre on Wednesday came up with a grim warning that a third Covid-19 wave in India was inevitable and admitted for the first time that B.1.617, an Indian mutant of the virus, could be fuelling the massive surge in the country.

"A phase three is inevitable, given the higher levels of the circulating virus, but it is not clear on what time scale this will occur. We should prepare for new waves," said K Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Centre said on Wednesday.

Amid clamour for stricter measures to contain the spread of the fierce wave, Niti Aayog member (health), V K Paul, who also heads the national Covid-19 task force, did not rule out the possibility of a national lockdown to break the chain of the virus. P9

Multiple probes launched into bed booking scam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

AS frenetic investigations and corrective measures got under way a day after the alleged bed allocation scam in Bengaluru was exposed - reportedly by Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya and other BJP leaders - a senior official, known for his efforts in Covid management, expressed grief over social media posts linking him to the incident. He has also raised objections over the issue being "communalised", with 16 people belonging to a minority community coming under the under the scanner.

Karnataka Lokayukta Justice P Vishwanatha Shetty initiated suo motu proceedings into the alleged scam and directed the Lokayukta police to conduct an independent probe and submit a report within three weeks.

The city police too registered two criminal cases in Jayanagar police station, arresting nine people, including two doctors. Four others are being questioned. Preliminary investigations have revealed the involvement of staff members of private hospitals too. The accused have been charged with breach of trust, cheating and extortion under provisions of the Indian Penal Code, besides provisions of the Disaster Management Act. Both the cases have now been transferred to the CCB for further investigation.

The BBMP Chief Commissioner, Gaurav Gupta, said the issue is being parallely investigated by the South zone special commissioner. The BBMP Joint Commissioner (Solid Waste Management) and in-charge of Covid Care Centres in Bengaluru, Sarfaraz Khan, expressed pain over being dragged into the alleged bed booking scam, with social media posts demanding that he be held "accountable" although he is not involved with the Covid war room.